

PART 5.

Third  
Series

MAY,  
1889.

VOL  
1

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM  
YEAR TO YEAR."

# All the Year Round

## a Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

# CHARLES DICKENS.

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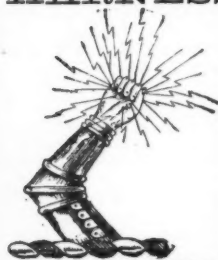
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# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

## A Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS.

No. 18.—THIRD SERIES.

SATURDAY, MAY 4, 1889.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

### LOUIS DRAYCOTT.

By MRS. R. S. DE COURCY LAFFAN.

Author of "Geoffrey Stirling," etc. etc.

#### CHAPTER V. DUMPHIE'S VISIT.

"BOOKS, books, books; my dear Draycott, what a fellow you are for books!"

Dumphie is sauntering along the lengths of my dwarf book-cases, running his finger down the edges of the shelves as he reads the titles on the bindings. He has a pipe in his mouth. He looks thoroughly comfortable and at home. Every now and again he takes down a book to turn over a leaf or two; then takes the stem of briar-wood from between his teeth, and remarks upon what he has seen.

"Yes," I answer. "You are right about my love of books. I have reason to love them. They have been my companions often—when I had no other."

"I, too, used to be a great book-lover once," says Dumphie, with a sigh. "I am still—in a sort of a way. I have some old, dry, mathematical things that I am very tender over. I used to fancy I had it in me to become a mathematical genius once. I'm not sure that I hadn't an idea in the dim and visionary distance of being a Senior Wrangler; of giving up the service for which I seemed then destined, and turning College don. We all have such vainglorious fancies at one time or other."

"Perhaps it was no fancy."

"You mean a dream that might have become a reality?"

"Yes; that square forehead of yours seems to indicate such a probability."

"Well, well, the turn for figures stands me in good stead at our place in the City; for you see everything changed all at once."

"You mean that God took the books you loved out of your hands, and showed you a 'more excellent way'—the way of the man who, taking his life in his hand, gives it to others, instead of grasping it for himself?"

Dumphie was silent a moment or two, still fingering the books. I fancy that, if he had turned round, I should have seen his eyes suffused with a brightness strange to them. He did not seem startled at any knowledge of his life implied by my words. Perhaps he did not notice it. He seemed dreamy to night—full of thoughts and memories of the past.

"When I gave up the others," he says, presently, "there was one thing I stuck to, and that was German. I found I had time to read after I got home from the counting-house; and when Mazie was old enough, I set about teaching her. To know German is like having in your possession the key to untold treasures. There is no country with such a literature as Germany. Mazie could read 'Ondine' when she was twelve years old, and used to say she thought the poplar-tree waving about opposite yon dormer windows was like the 'Nickenden Mann.'

"I noticed a volume of Schiller on her table the other day. I ventured to open it, and found it scored by pencil-marks as my own books are."

Dumphie has his back to me, and a volume of Carlyle in his hand. He hardly seems to have heard my last comment. He turns and looks at me intently. He has very bright, slightly prominent eyes, and is apt to concentrate them upon a given subject with a grave intentness that would, methinks, be hard to meet if you had anything to keep back.



"It has often struck me," says Dumphie, "that, before you knew us, you must have led a lonely kind of life."

"I did."

"And you found in work—hard work and plenty of it—what others find in sympathy and companionship?"

"Yes, work has been to me—salvation."

"And we—what have we been to you?"

"Light and life."

I hear the thrill in my own voice that comes, whether I will or no, with the utterance of those two words.

"I am glad that we have been so much to you. I am more glad than I can say—"

He turns over the leaves of the book in his hand; then he sits down in the old easy-chair opposite me, and we both fall into silence, the smoke from his pipe, and the smoke from mine, gently ascending in rings of pale, grey mist. Men, when in conversation, are more given, I think, to intervals of silence than women. I am the one to break this silence:

"To hold a book you want to read, in one hand, and a paper-knife in the other, always, seems to me like getting a friend all to yourself. It is a delightful sensation."

But my companion evidently answers to a train of thought of his own, not to my words:

"And the work that has been salvation to you, is your work there?" with a motion of his hand towards the prison.

"Yes; there is no better work than having to minister to others, it leaves you no time to minister to yourself."

"You have learnt a great deal from it—your prison work, I mean?"

"Yes—to pity and forgive. It has helped me to enter more into what I feel must be the mind of God towards the wrong-doing in the world."

"You mean that it has taught you the true meaning of the words: 'God is Love'?"

"I mean that in the very worst, the very lowest, the most degraded, I have never failed to find some trace of good. I mean that it has taught me how much devil-worship there is in the world, going about under the guise of religion; how much so-called religion, that has no more likeness to 'the mind of God, or the truth as it is in Jesus,' than a man stricken with some dire disease has to whole and healthy humanity."

It is a new happiness to me, speaking

out so freely all the thoughts that in me lie. For how long a while back they have spoken only through those pencillings and markings that have caught Dumphie's fancy so much to-night!

Silence again. This time broken by Dumphie.

"Draycott, I wish you had known my father. I should have said Mazie's father"—this with some signs of agitation—"I mean Colonel Birt."

"I know whom you mean. I wish I had known him."

"I always feel to owe him so much. It might almost be as if in some strange and subtle way we had all of us inherited something of his nature—we boys, who were nothing to him by any tie of blood, only by the tenderest, truest tie of love. I was nothing but a little chap, comparatively speaking, when he went on active service again, after my mother's death; and yet the thought of him has stayed with me all my life, and helped me, and made things easy."

I dared not say I understood; I dared not betray Aunt Dacie's chatterings by the firelight; I dared not let him see that I could read between the lines.

Dumphie's eyes were gazing dreamily at the fire; his pipe lay on the mantelshelf—he had forgotten that, and everything else beside, save the past, to which his thoughts had wandered.

"And yet he was not a clever man—a simple soul, a brave soldier, looking at everything in life in such a simple way, seeing just the wrong and the right, and always choosing the right. I think his heart broke when my mother died; not that he was less thoughtful for us, less readily interested in all about us, our little troubles, and our little joys; but yet he was all things with a difference. An awe of this sorrow of his grew upon me. I used to sit beside his knee, and hold his hand and stroke it, not speaking all the time. He would sometimes carry Mazie—such a little, golden-haired darling as she was!—up and down the room, bending his face close over hers, and saying over and over again: 'My little girl, my little Mazie, with the mother's eyes!' That was quite true. It is quite true now. Mazie is just like mother, only more fragile-looking. Children can remember more than we think. I remember them taking me in to see her when she was dying. I remember trying hard not to cry, lest she should be sorry because of my being so sorry. I can

remember it, as if it was yesterday. But—do I weary you with all this?"

"No, no; tell me more of those past days."

I spoke calmly. I sat quite still, looking as rugged and hard-featured, I doubt not, as in that celebrated picture done by Hazledean of Corpus; but I was drinking in eagerly every word Dumphie spoke. I had much ado to refrain my lips from echoing that cry of love: "My little girl, my little girl!"

"I remember so well," continued Dumphie, with a little well-pleased smile at my interest in these reminiscences of his, "how, after my dear mother's death, we boys all took up our abode in Prospect Place, quite as a matter of course, you know. Fortunately, it is nearly twice the size of all the other houses, and has two big, low rooms at the top—attics I suppose one should call them—with dormer windows built in the roof. So we managed very well; and Aunt Charlotte, a sister of Miss Birt's, who died afterwards, made everything so pleasant, and really spoiled Glennie to such a lamentable extent, that we all settled down as contentedly as pigeons in a cote. Everything was done for us, as I said before, just as a matter of course; exactly the same as though we were Colonel Birt's own sons. His income went to keep us in comfort, each and all of us, share and share alike, also as a matter of course. Then, quite suddenly, something went wrong. He had saved money and invested it. He was no man of business; only a simple soul, too honest to suspect others. He had relied upon the counsel of a seeming friend, and now—the savings were gone. There was no murmuring. He told me that he had let sorrow make him indolent and selfish; though Heaven knows no man ever led a more selfless life. He said this blow had been sent to stir him up to action again; that we were growing 'big boys,' and that our education must be thought of. The few thousands my mother possessed in her own right he had had tied down upon us; but the income they brought in was very small. He had set his mind upon our being educated in the best manner. I was to go in for the Royal Engineers; the twins for the Navy; Glennie must be a soldier, too; he was so fond of fighting and getting up battles with his countless boxes of tin soldiers. All this was to prepare me for the fact that he was going back to Indian service. There were stormy symptoms in

the East, just then. They were glad to get good—he called it 'seasoned'—men. Papa Birt—we used to call him that—had applied for an appointment, and got it. He was going now, at once. I loved him passionately. The iron entered into my young soul as he spoke. A month later he was gone. Aunt Charlotte had nearly fallen back into her old invalid ways from continual weeping. Aunt Dacie had no eyes left to speak of; and poor old Kezia used to sit half her time behind the scullery door, with her apron over her head."

"An odd habit that," I put in casually.

"Oh! you know about it, do you?" says Dumphie, with a slightly startled air.

"Yes; Aunt Dacie—Miss Birt—mentioned it to me."

He hesitates a moment, looking at me intently, then goes on with his story:

"The parting had been terrible—a thing never to be forgotten. The Colonel gathered us young ones about him; his arms seemed to clasp and hold us every one. The tears were running down his face. I never saw it again. I am not likely to forget it. 'Little children,' he said, 'love one another.'"

We were both silent for a moment; and when Dumphie spoke again he was a thought husky. I should have been the same had I tried to say anything; but I only pulled at my pipe, and stared at the fire.

"He spoke to all of us; but yet—I felt in all my aching, childish heart, most of all to me. He would fain say to me, the eldest of the little flock, 'love them, guard them, tend them. I give them into your keeping—I, who may never again see one of these dear faces.' We had to loosen Mazie's hands from his coat-collar at last, and I held her—it was not an easy job—while he drove off."

Thoughts had been running riot in my heart as I had listened to the story which I now am trying to set down here from memory, fearing all the time that I am hardly doing justice to the quaint and simple pathos of Dumphie's words. It has made me very happy that he should speak so openly to me. I knew that it must mean I held some place in his good opinion, for men are chary of laying bare to each other such sacred phases of life as these that he has told to me; and yet I am wondering if under his words there lurks some subtle meaning? I wonder if Dumphie, Mazie's brother, the man to whose sacred guardianship Colonel Birt

bequeathed this child of his love, is warning me? Has he read, with those true, searching eyes of his, the story of the past months; read it as clearly as though he had looked over my shoulder as I set it down here, line by line, and day by day? Do I seem too gnarled and rugged a tree to have so fair and fragile a flower wind its loving arms about me, filling my life with sweetness? Is it because he thinks my case a hopeless one that Dumphie is so open and candid with me to-night? Did he not say, or rather did not Aunt Dacie say for him this morning, that he "wanted to talk to me about something"? Is the record of these tender memories a softening to me—as he hopes—of the bitter gall and wormwood that is in store?

I have never been a patient man. What patience I possess is acquired, not natural. I resolve to rush upon fate.

"What you tell me, Macgregor, of these early days of yours, makes me understand thoroughly how it was you felt that you must just give up everything, and be 'Papa Birt' to the rest, when your father—when Colonel Birt died."

What a treat is Dumphie's face, as he turns it full upon me in the firelight!

"Give up everything—be 'Papa Birt' to the lads?" he says. "Why, Draycott, who has been telling you? How do you know?"

"Aunt Dacie told me," I say, with amazing coolness, slowly drawing the tobacco-pouch to my hand, and preparing to refill. "She told me a great many more things beside. She and I have grown to be great friends, you see. She told me how, after the Colonel was gone, the parrot would keep calling out: 'Papa Birt, Papa Birt—where is Papa Birt?'"

"She told you all that?"

"Oh, yes, and much more beside. I don't think that ever any one told me so many things in my life as Aunt Dacie has done."

I kept an eye upon Dumphie, to see if he winces at my familiar mention of Miss Birt. But not a bit of it.

He is on his legs in a moment, and has me by both hands, so that a lot of my best Cavendish is scattered to the winds of heaven.

"Upon my word, Draycott," he says, "I am delighted to hear all this. I am delighted to find you have got on so well with Aunt Dacie, you know—are on such mighty confidential terms with her, you know! It smooths the way; it

makes it quite an easy kind of thing to introduce the subject I came here to talk over with you to-night—it does, indeed!"

The dear fellow's face is one glow of satisfaction—it looks so good, so honest, so very much in earnest, that I feel to the bottom of my soul that if ever it came to having to go against Dumphie, the task would be a bitter one indeed.

Here is George to say I am wanted in the prison. So good-bye to further gossiping to-night.

To-morrow's record must tell of Dumphie's errand.

### SIR FRANCIS CHANTREY AND HIS BEQUEST.

ANNUALLY, at the Royal Academy Exhibition of pictures, in Burlington House, we see attached to a certain number of paintings and works of sculpture: "Bought under the terms of the Chantrey bequest."

In like manner we observe, in one of the galleries of the South Kensington Museum, a collection of such works of art, "Lent by the President and Council of the Royal Academy;" to which are appended the notice of my first sentence.

This Chantrey bequest—what is it? And Chantrey? Well, every one knows that he was a sculptor; but few, probably, are aware of many of the details of his life and work; of how he struggled and rose; of how he left to the world of Art a legacy of such munificence as does not often fall to its share.

The study of his career should be not only instructive, but highly encouraging to the youthful artist, who is possessed of talent, but is impatient of that steady, ceaseless work, without which he may never reach the goal of his high aspirations.

This is the record of his life.

Francis Chantrey was born at Norton, a village in Derbyshire, not far from Sheffield, in the year 1781. Of the lad's youth, little is told. His father owned and cultivated a small property, but died when the child was only eight years of age; and, the widow marrying again, young Chantrey's future fell into the hands of friends, who determined that he should become a solicitor. But this decree was immensely distasteful to the youth, who from his earliest days had liked nothing better than drawing and modelling. Thus, to please

him, it was arranged that he should be apprenticed to a carver and gilder of Sheffield. With this man Chantrey found opportunities of learning to paint and to mould, as well as to carve; and, ultimately, deciding upon modelling as his future work in life, and upon London as the scene of it, he left the Sheffield carver and gilder six months before the time of his apprenticeship was expired—a privilege for which he paid fifty pounds—and entered upon his labour.

For eight years he worked steadily and faithfully, and five pounds sterling was the amount by which his pocket was enriched during that period.

His first imaginative creation was a head of Satan, exhibited in the Royal Academy in the year 1808; his first—at any rate important—order, a marble monument erected by the people of Sheffield to the memory of their Vicar, the Rev. J. Wilkinson.

The skill and fidelity with which this order was carried out brought Chantrey's name into prominence as a young and rising artist; and the next thing we read of him renders the assurance of his future an accomplished fact. Nor, once on the high-road to fortune and fame, did he ever look back, as old nursery books say, but travelled on to the end of the journey a thoroughly successful man.

An order for four colossal busts of Admirals Duncan, Howe, Vincent, and Nelson, for Greenwich Hospital, represented the outcome of his spirited work at Sheffield.

To the ready wit of Horne Tooke, who recognised in the young sculptor talent, hard work, and perseverance, Chantrey had much to be grateful for. This remarkable personage, then residing at Wimbledon, took a fancy to Chantrey, allowed him to model a bust of himself, was charmed with it, and introduced the sculptor to many influential and wealthy friends. One strange order Tooke gave the young man—an order to procure a fine slab of black marble to be placed above him where he lay, as he had elected to lie in death, in a tomb in his own garden at Wimbledon.

"Well, Chantrey," said he, the day the marble was delivered, "now that you have sent my tombstone, I shall live a year longer."

And this proved to be the case. But Ealing Churchyard, instead of the garden at Wimbledon, was Horne Tooke's final resting-place.

In 1811 Chantrey married his cousin, Miss Wale, a lady possessed of a nice fortune. The newly-wedded pair settled in a house of ample size and convenience; and Chantrey, free from the grinding circumstances of poverty, pursued his labour under the most advantageous auspices.

The year following his marriage he completed a statue of King George the Third for the Guildhall; and a monument to the memory of the daughter of Mr. Johns, of Hafod, which was exhibited in Spring Gardens, as it was found to be too large for the Academy. Chantrey was now considered the first sculptor of the day, and received very numerous orders, in the execution of which his fame became strengthened.

As his chief works at this time, may be cited a bust of the King, one of Lady Gertrude Sloane, and others of Professor Playfair, the Marquis of Anglesea, Sir Joseph Banks, and Earl Saint Vincent.

In manner, Chantrey was frank and unceremonious; in character and in work, thoroughly honest. Possessed of a very jocular spirit, he enjoyed a bit of fun as well as any one; but his affection for a practical joke never led him to say or do anything to annoy or vex. His generosity was so great that his discrimination suffered; he never lost an opportunity of helping one less fortunate than himself, but was so impulsive that not unfrequently he was deceived, and bestowed aid upon those who imposed upon his kindness.

The most marked characteristic of his style, as of his life, was simplicity. "His works," says his faithful chronicler, "are free from any extraneous ornament, and he rejected everything that called the attention from the simple dignity of the subject represented."

His busts are true likenesses, not idealisms. In his monuments he used the simplest, but most touching emblems, to describe events, such as a broken lily in the centre of a wreath, to symbolise the death of the head of a family. In statuary his attitudes are easy and unrestrained. He showed people as they were, rather than after a fanciful manner which might look imposing, but certainly would not be natural.

One of his most widely known works is the monument in Lichfield Cathedral, known as the "Sleeping Children," erected to the memory of the two children of the Rev. W. Robinson. A friend of the sculptor's was one day contemplating it,



when he heard a man who stood by remark: "How admirably the mattress on which the children are lying is represented!"

When told of this criticism, Chantrey replied, "That he who said so was a sensible, honest man, for he spoke of that which he understood, and of nothing else."

Another charming child-portrait is that of Lady Louisa Russell, in Woburn Abbey, whom the sculptor represents standing on tip-toe, with a dove nestling in her bosom.

Chantrey disliked works in bronze; but the numerous commissions which he received for them decided him to build a foundry for himself conveniently near his residence in Eccleston Place. His equestrian statue of Sir Thomas Munro, at Madras, is said to be a good specimen of his skill in this branch of art. The Duke of Wellington, when he saw it, delivered himself of three criticisms, with pauses between each: "A very fine horse—a very fine statue—and a very extraordinary man!"

In London we have, amongst other pieces of his work, the statues of Pitt in Hanover Square, of George the Fourth in Trafalgar Square, of the Duke of Wellington in front of the Exchange, and of Canning in the Abbey.

In Edinburgh there are Lord Melville, President Blair, and Chief Justice Dundas. The statue of George Washington, in the States House, Boston, U.S.A., is another example of his work.

In 1818 he visited Italy, and, whilst there, went to Carrara to choose marbles. Upon his arrival at the quarry, he did not immediately disclose his name, and was immensely amused to find that only inferior specimens of marble were shown to him. He remedied the error, and immediately the best of the place was put before him.

In this country he made the acquaintance of Thorwaldsen, and Canova. It is written of the English and Italian masters, that, when they parted, they exchanged cloaks as a tribute of friendship one for the other.

It is now time to speak of Chantrey's honours, ere this brief record of a busy life closes. In 1816, he was chosen an Associate of the Royal Academy, and in 1818, a member. During his sojourn in Italy, he was elected member of the Academies of Rome and Florence. In 1835, William the Fourth bestowed upon

him the honour of knighthood; and he was made a D.C.L. of Oxford.

On the twenty-fifth of November, 1841, after only two hours' illness, Chantrey died from the effects of heart-disease, under which he had for some time laboured, and was buried in a tomb of his own construction, in his native village, Norton.

Lady Chantrey survived her husband—there were no children—and at her death, according to the provisions of his will, his wealth and valuable collection became the property of the Royal Academy.

"Sir Francis Chantrey," writes one of his friends, "made the Academy the first object of his thoughts, and has nobly proved it by his will. When he became a member of the body, his exertion in council, and in the general assemblies, was zealous and uninterrupted, until the end of his mortal career. The little attention given to the higher branches of Art in this country, induced Chantrey to turn his mind to the promotion of a study, instructive, as well as amusing, to mankind; and as he did not find persons inclined to give commissions, or purchase pictures of a moral, historical, or religious character, he wished to establish a fund, to prevent an object so desirable being lost sight of, and left the greater part of his property for that purpose. Such was his trust in the Royal Academy, that he confided the decision on works to be selected to members of that institution."

In his youth Chantrey was thought like Shakespeare; so much so, indeed, that he once said: "Shakespeare might have been the ruin of me; for when I was young, and knew no better, I had been told I was like his picture, and that notion nearly made me a coxcomb!"

In the National Portrait Gallery there are one or two likenesses of this eminent man.

## THE LETTER "H."

ALTHOUGH it is generally recognised that the correct usage of the letter H is a sign of education and culture, the cause of its being misused so frequently is a problem as to the solution of which there is not so much unanimity. The whole question, however, resolves itself into this: Is the misuse of the aspirate "no new thing," or has it become common since a recent period only? Let us consider the evidence for the former view first.



Anulus Gellius, who flourished nearly eighteen hundred years ago, has recorded the fact that the old Latin writers of two centuries earlier, had called this injustice to the H a barbarism; whereas Nigidius Figulus, a celebrated grammarian contemporary with Cicero, had pronounced it a provincialism.

Clearly, therefore, there was something wrong with the H even in those days. It is curious, too, that the troublesome letter was a stumbling-block to the ancient Hebrews also; at least, to the unfortunate Ephraimites, who, after their defeat by Jephtha, strove to escape by denying themselves; but each man was questioned by the victorious Gileadites:

"Art thou an Ephraimite? If he said Nay, then said they unto him, Say now Shibboleth; and he said Sibboleth; for he could not frame to pronounce it right," etc.

Here of course the H is medial. Among the arguments set forth in a pamphlet written for the purpose of identifying the British people with the lost tribes of Israel, it is stated that Ai is frequently called Hai, in the Bible itself, and, contrariwise, Hai is called Ai.

As evidence in the same direction, it is pointed out that the use of "an," before words beginning with H, in our translation and in English writings belonging to the last century and the beginning of the present, shows that in those days people were careless about the use of the aspirate. Mr. Grant White, who has traced the misuse of H more than two hundred years back, quotes, in support of his conclusion, the following extracts from the marriages and births in an old family Bible:

"John Harmond hand Mary was married in the year of our Lord God 1735, November the 25 day. John, the son of John Harmond, was born the 24 day of June, 1737, half an our after tow o'clock."

He concludes from this that "hand" was used for "and," and "a hour" for "an 'our."

But—to turn to the other side of the question—it is just as reasonable to conclude that the omission of the H in spelling the word "hour" shows that nobody sounded it in that word. As regards the appeal to the Bible, everybody knows that "a" and "an" are in many cases used indifferently—"a hour," for example, in one part, and "an hour" in another. And, if the misuse of H were general, it is rather

surprising that it did not attract the attention of the novelists until the last generation. So far as we remember, the "H malady" is not referred to at all in Fielding or Smollet.

Perhaps the most striking argument against what may be called the "ancient" theory, is, however, found in the fact that in America, as in Ireland, the letter H is scarcely ever misused; and indeed it is the belief in those countries that a recent arrival from England may be known by the peculiarity of his speech in regard to the letter H.

If, then, we suppose that, say one hundred and fifty years ago, the misuse of the aspirate was common in this country, how are we to account for the correct speaking of the Americans? Nobody will ascribe it to more widely-diffused education; because it is well known that in America, and, perhaps, still more in Ireland, there are some people who cannot even spell words which they pronounce correctly. As modes of pronunciation are handed down from generation to generation, and as the bulk of the English part of the American nation has gone over to the new country within the last century and a half, there is good reason to infer that the misuse of the letter H is of comparatively modern origin. If it can be proved beyond doubt that this view is erroneous, it is inexplicable how the Americans and the Irish are accurate in the matter of their Hs.

Any reader who will look through a list of the "obsolete" words in Thomson's poems, will see many so classified which are now known to "any schoolboy." Having had a rest, such words have come into use again. Language is constantly changing, and it may be that, at irregular intervals, there breaks out an H epidemic. The Heepian dialect was no doubt a satire of some current mispronunciations of the time, and it certainly did not fail in its object, for it is now the usual practice to sound the H in "hospital," "humor," and "humble." Some writer of the twentieth century may have occasion to again draw attention to the subject.

The forcible introduction of the H where it ought not to be, and the painfully obtrusive strengthening of the H where it ought to be, may be fairly regarded as effects of reaction against a bad habit. Conscious that they are blundering, people of the class of Mr. Middlewick put in a strong H or two to make up for a dozen which they have left out, until, getting more and more confused,

they become as bad as Punch's barber, or the man in the story told by Sir H. Ponsonby. A Mr. Hillier remonstrated with a friend for calling him 'Illier.

"What do you mean?" asked the friend. The reply was staggering. "If a hache and a hi and a hel and a hel and a hi and a he and a har don't spell 'Illier, what do they spell?"

Some persons, however, drop Hs in certain words without making up for the omission by putting in the aspirate where it is not wanted. Mr. T. A. Trollope says that Landor belonged to this class. In his case the habit could not have been due to ignorance — indeed, the assertion would be almost incredible, were it not notorious that Landor had many peculiarities of pronunciation.

It would be difficult to say in what districts the misuse of the letter H is most prevalent; and, considering the spirit of "clannishness" which animates most of us, it is unwise to be too dogmatic on this point. But, speaking roughly, we think it may be said that the mispronunciation of H is very common in the South and very rare in the North. The true Cockney who has received a reasonable education is, compared with the mass of Englishmen, neither very good nor very bad in regard to the letter H. He certainly does not misplace his Hs with such monotonous regularity as Theodore Hook and the wits of the Albert Smith school would have us believe. The inhabitants of Worcestershire, it has been said, like to immortalise their pronunciation on stone, and in proof of the assertion the following lines of an epitaph are quoted:

Lo! where the silent marble weeps,  
A faithful friend and neighbour sleeps,  
A brother and a uncle dear,  
As to the world did appear.

It will be observed that the third line requires the additional H—"a huncle." This doggerel, however, is common in all parts of the country, and was probably written by somebody very far removed from any relation to Worcestershire. The charge brought against another county, in the form of a remonstrance from the letter H to the inhabitants of Shropshire, is more to the point:

Whereas by you we have been driven  
From hearth and home, from hope and heaven,  
And plac'd by your most learn'd society  
In exile, anguish, and anxiety,  
We hereby claim full restitution,  
And beg you'll mend your elocution.

The reply, however, is clever:

Whereas we rescued you, ingrate,  
From hell, from error, and from hate,  
From hedgebill, horsepond, and from halter,  
And consecrated you in altar,  
We think your claim is an intrusion,  
And will not mend our elocution.

Although not immediately bearing upon the misuse of H, it is not without interest in this connection that both Irishmen and Scotchmen sound the aspirate before the W in such words as "what," "when," and "which," to which they give the same value as the Anglo-Saxon "hwæt," "hwænne," "hwite."

Soon after "David Copperfield" was published, there arose quite a little storm in the dignified pages of "Notes and Queries" in reference to the Heepian dialect. One correspondent wrote that, in his childhood, he was always taught to sink the H in "humble," and added that he regretted that the author thought fit to proscribe this practice, so far as in him lay, by making it the Shibboleth of two of the meanest and vilest characters in his works. Another correspondent—a Londoner—says he never heard the H sounded in "humble," except from the pulpit; while still another gives the following ingenious solution of the difficulty: "All existing humility is either pride or hypocrisy. Pride aspirates the H, hypocrisy suppresses it. I always aspirate." Others, again, strongly contended that the author of "David Copperfield" was quite right. Who shall decide when doctors disagree? Even admitted authorities are at issue with regard to many words commencing with H; and, therefore, it is not surprising that ordinary persons, who do not have the opportunity of hearing the best speakers and of reading the best authors, should be hopelessly at sea as to many of the delicate subtleties of the letter H.

The article "an" is an unsafe guide to those in doubt, since Jane Austen wrote "an hozier;" and the translators of the Bible say, "an high hand," "an hair," "an habergeon," "an humble heart," etc.

Then vocal ease is an equally unsatisfactory test. Possibly some people may experience difficulty in saying "a hotel," or "a historian;" but with the majority of people proper aspiration in both those instances is just as easy as in such words as "horse" or "house."

Taking all circumstances into consideration, perhaps the only rough rule in regard

to the correct use of the letter H is that it should be pronounced in all words coming to us from the Celtic stock, and be passed unsounded in all words of Latin origin. The following ingenious composition was produced to show the effect of such a rule :

Ha ! 'tis a horrible hallucination  
To grudge our hymns their halcyon harmonies,  
When in just homage our rapt voices rise  
To celebrate our heroes in meet fashion ;  
Whose hosts each heritage and habitation,  
Within these realms of hospitable joy,  
Protect securely 'gainst humiliation,  
When hostile foes, like harpies, would annoy.  
Habituated to the sound of H  
In history and histrionic art,  
We deem the man a homicide of speech,  
Maiming humanity in a vital part,  
Whose humorous hilarity would treat us,  
In lieu of H, with a supposed hiatus.

### THE EIFFEL TOWER.

THE other morning—it was a moist, soft, dripping, and not unkindly morning of early spring—the clouds hung low and threatened more rain ; but the sunshine made a fight to struggle through the clouds, and, between smiles and frowns, everything went at a gentle undecided pace among the broad boulevards and monumental buildings of charming Paris. Come rain, and the noise of the traffic would settle into a steady roar ; innumerable umbrellas would hustle and hurtle against each other ; the towering façades would assume a dismal chilly aspect, and all Paris would shrink into its shell—liveries would be cased in oilskins, elegant costumes shrouded in waterproofs, uniforms wrapped up in military cloaks, and brazen helmets deprived of their sweeping plumes, dripping like so many barbers' basins. But let it be sunshine, and everything will unfold and spread out. Wheels and hoofs will give out a pleasing chime, mingled with the cries of the streets, with the chatter and laughter of women and children, and the rattle of glasses and trays from under the awnings of the cafés ; while the wet, shining roadways show bright reflections of the white tall houses with their curtains and persiennes, and their balconies crowded with flowers.

After all, it is not a terrible affair to be caught by a sudden shower in the streets of Paris, even in a new hat and "sans parapluie ;" there are so many corners to shelter in—portes-cochères, awnings, passages, and innumerable portals of hotels and cafés.

But it is a different matter to be overtaken by the storm in crossing a wide, open space like the Place de la Concorde, with only a statue or a fountain offering itself as a place of refuge. All the world has fled, and in the whole extent of the wide Place, there is only to be seen the figure of a solitary dragoon cantering dolefully along under the weight of a despatch from the Ministry of War. Yet the shower passes, and everything brightens up in a moment—the trees in the gardens just thickening with buds ; columns and arches in the long perspective ; the gilded dome of the Invalides shines out from over the river ; and there, away, that wonderful Eiffel Tower, whose top is, for the moment, wrapped in wreathing clouds. The base of it is plainly outlined against the dark background of lowering sky—those four gigantic feet, which it plants so firmly on the soil, as if it were the elephant of Indian mythology, which sustains the weight of the world. The lowest platform is visible, too, and the one above it ; but the tapering heights beyond are lost among the clouds. And the mystery in which it is now veiled gives an air of grandeur and even grace to this great monument of the age of iron.

This aspect of the Eiffel Tower is but a transitory one. Soon the clouds pass away, or float into higher regions, and the full proportions of the structure are revealed. As one approaches it are to be seen men like flies crawling about among the cobweb tracery of the ironwork. The subdued rattle of hammers is heard from far overhead. People all speak respectfully of the Eiffel Tower, which forms a leading mark, as sailors would say, for Paris and its forthcoming Exhibition. Silenced are all the objectors who, when the tower was first designed, objected that it would neither be elegant nor useful, and that it would even militate against the architectural beauties of Paris by dwarfing the proportions of its noblest monuments. Now that the tower is finished, and rears itself proudly as the very tallest monument ever erected by the skill of man, all Paris shares in the pride, and plumes itself upon the achievement.

On the quays, by the river, men are selling views and descriptions of the new-born wonder, and the portrait of its designer and builder ; and it is curious to note that line for line and rib for rib, the existing tower corresponds exactly with the first design published three years ago, before the tower was commenced. Toys

of all kinds, too, are on sale, in which the Eiffel Tower appears in one form or another; and the open-air merchants seem to do a brisk trade in these memorials of the great achievement.

A little further on, an old gentleman has rigged up a telescope on a stand, and offers passers-by a peep at the operations going on at the very summit of the tower, where men are crawling about like flies, engaged in putting the finishing touches to the crowning cupola. "*C'est bien curieux*," says the old gentleman, confidentially, as he pockets the offerings of his clients; and curious, indeed, it is to see those midge-like men hammering away, quite at home at that giddy height, and to hear the faint clink of their tools from on high, as if repairs were going on in the vault of heaven.

The tower grows upon you as you approach it, crossing that bridge of Jena, which truculent old Blucher would have blown up to the skies, on account of the name it bore, so unpleasantly commemorative of Prussia's great disaster. From the bridge you can appreciate the height and span of the great arches, which bind together the massive feet of the monster tower, beneath which appear in the distance the domes and towers of the Exhibition buildings. All about are the sheds and workshops belonging to the undertaking; and the road descends into a waste of ruts and cart-tracks, where you look up into the network of the giant, creep under his huge legs and peep about, and follow with the eyes the lines of stairs and ladders which zigzag upwards from height to height. One has a feeling, somehow, that the earth is crushed and compressed under its monstrous burden; but this is only in the imagination. We are assured that the pressure is so distributed that its effect is nowhere greater than that beneath the walls of any building of moderate height. Tossed and tumbled as the earth has been round about, it is being rapidly brought into order by mattock and rake. A confused heap of stone and earth in the middle is presently to appear as a great circular fountain; and the waste ground about it will soon be green with turf and gay with flowers.

The plan of the tower is simplicity itself. It consists of four curved and tapering latticed girders set on end, which approach each other at a gentle inclination till they meet, and are then continued in the form of a square tower of iron lace-

work to the height of the topmost platform or gallery, which is eight hundred and sixty-three feet above the level of the soil. From the gallery springs a lighter cupola of arabesque complexion, crowned with a square lantern tower surrounded by a small gallery, accessible to the most adventurous, the extreme summit reaching the proposed height of three hundred metres, or nearly a thousand English feet.

Returning to the basement of the tower, we find its four pedestals connected by four enormous arches of latticed ironwork, the crown of each being some hundred feet in height from the ground with a span of a little over two hundred. From the inner angles of these arches springs a high latticed dome, a maze of intersecting ironwork, up to which you gaze with wonder as you stand beneath the centre of the tower. Above this is placed the lower gallery, which runs round the outside of the whole erection, destined to become a place of popular resort, with cafés, concerts, and restaurants to pass the time, and all around stretches a fine panorama of Paris, with the Seine wandering among palaces and public gardens, with the park of St. Cloud and the Bois de Boulogne setting off the great curve of the sparkling river, while to the north the heights of Montmartre frown darkly over the city, with the bulk of the great church rising among its scaffoldings. Then for a more distant view there is the second gallery, at the height of three hundred and seventy-six feet. In the platform below we were on a level with the Monument, and here we are just above the golden gallery of St. Paul's. But for those who have the heart to make the ascent, and take a place in the lift for a journey towards the sky, there is that wonderful eyrie at the top, the highest point ever yet reached by human constructions.

From the very top of the tower on a clear day is a view like that from a balloon. Paris is seen as a whole, girt with her ramparts and protected by outlying forts; far away among fields and market-gardens all round lies a soft, fertile country, with forests here and there, and parks and châteaux, and innumerable villages, and rivers like silver ribbons winding here and there. The eye may follow the course of the Seine till it loses itself among the hills of Normandy. With a powerful glass, perhaps, one might make out the tower of that Château Gaillard, which Richard Cœur



de Lion placed there as the impregnable bulwark of that fair province. Then there is the valley of the Oise, with Chantilly perched upon its wooded heights. A cloud on the horizon may perhaps represent the busy city of Amiens, and further to the right can be discovered the course of the river Marne, as it comes wimpling in from the gentle slopes and vine-covered hills of Champagne. Taking a turn about the gallery, behold there is Fontainebleau with its forests; and, beyond, the hills that guard the upper course of the Loire even to Orleans. And the country that lies over there is fertile Burgundy. It is a bird's-eye view of one of the fairest and most fertile regions of the earth.

Best garden of this world,  
Our fertile France.

And, indeed, the far-reaching view from this dizzy height has suggested that one of the uses of the tower would be in the direful event of another war, as a look-out post from which to watch the approaches to Paris, and to keep an eye on the movements of the enemy. Nor would it be difficult to flash signals from the summit of the tower to a vast extent of country round about. But, on the other hand, it would be a handsome mark for the enemy's artillery, and not a pleasant post to occupy during a bombardment.

But let such ill-omened thoughts be banished from this scene of peaceful industry. The tower is a success because it has succeeded, and it is in itself a grand advertisement for the engineering skill and enterprise of our neighbours. Still, if you must have public utility, various ways have been suggested in which it may prove of service in the cause of science. Its summit, placed far above the mists and vapours of the city, might be available for observations of the starry sphere: whether it will be sufficiently free from vibration to allow the use of delicate instruments, is a matter that experience only can decide. Experiments on the laws of gravitation, especially those that govern falling bodies, have also been suggested, as well as demonstrations of the revolution of the earth on its own axis—about which there is, it seems, still some slight scepticism in various quarters.

As to how the tower will behave in a thunderstorm is also the subject of a good deal of speculation. Spectators will probably clear out when any threatening clouds of electric character appear in the

neighbourhood. Yet there is a lightning-conductor, which rises some fifty feet above the summit; and it seems highly probable that the whole structure will form a safe conductor, by which the super-abundant fluid of the electric storm may pass safely to and fro. In that case, the tower would serve as the protector of the adjacent regions from destructive thunderstorms. It would be curious, certainly, "*bien curieux*," to see the summit wreathed in thunder-clouds, and an electric storm in progress among its iron ribs; but here, again, only experience can decide what the effect may prove.

Down below, where people are passing under the huge arches, and craning their necks to see what is going on overhead, there is a general feeling of respect and admiration for the great tower. What a candlestick it will make! What a light-house for surrounding regions! When the sun goes down, and the stars begin to appear, the peasant far away will watch for the appearance of the great beacon light—the dazzling electric arc—which will flame from the head of the great tower. From country house and farm, from presbytery and village café, all will await the signal of the mystic beam—the visible sign and witness of the great international fête that is going on at its base. Surely there will be a kind of magic charm about it to bring people from far and near. We shall all fly like moths towards the harmless, cheerful light that is to burn on the top of the Eiffel Tower.

And now it is a question of a more general view from the grounds of the great Exposition. What a scene of bustle and apparent confusion it all is! Great buildings are springing up in every direction, vast halls, lofty domes, and endless ranges of galleries and pavilions. Here a train of loaded railway waggons is rumbling slowly along, drawn by a huge, noisy engine, while a steam-roller close by adds to the din. Carts and rude country waggons, loaded with cases, are drawn by struggling horses along the deeply-rutted tracks, while the encouraging cries of the waggoners, and the resounding cracks of their whips, join the general concert. Among all this confusion, however, there is rest to be found and comparative tranquillity, under the verandah of one of the numerous cafés, which have already opened their doors to the army of employés and exhibitors, and which form a kind of cosmopolitan lounge, where the language is



polyglot, and the costumes and complexions of the company are various. To drink a "bock," and smoke, and gaze solemnly at the Eiffel Tower, is a relief from the whirl of excitement elsewhere. And an American, seated at an adjoining table, regards the scene with an admiring but slightly envious glance.

"Yes, sir," he remarks, "we ought to have had that monument in our country, where its surroundings would have been on a corresponding scale of grandeur."

He does not at first allude to the Washington Monument—hitherto the highest in the world, some five hundred and fifty feet high—but when it is mentioned, he admits regretfully that the Frenchman has gone a good many chips better than that.

Still, America reconciles itself with the suggestion that in weight, perhaps, the trans-Atlantic monument might be superior. And that is possibly the case, for the Eiffel Tower is wonderfully light for its size, and weighs only six thousand five hundred tons, so that it might be possible to take it to pieces, and ship it across the Atlantic.

Our friend seems to be mentally calculating the freight that would have to be paid, and the chances of success of such a speculation. After all, the cost of the tower was not excessive. Two hundred thousand pounds for the biggest tower in the world is not much; and yet it is said that this estimate has hardly been exceeded, at which rate it has cost about threepence a pound—not much above the price of flat-irons.

It may be noticed that even the waiters of the café—and these are not a class generally given to enthusiasm—are greatly interested in the Eiffel Tower. As they dart about here and there, they find a spare moment to watch what is going on in the dizzy heights above. Not many hours will elapse before the work will be pronounced complete; the national flag will be hoisted; a "feu de joie" will be fired; and a "déjeuner," or, at all events, a "ponche," will be given at the very top of the tower. Alphonse is acquainted with a confière, who is charged with the arrangements of this little fête. To take one's punch or one's coffee at such a height from the ground must be, in the opinion of Alphonse, an "expérience bien curieux."

In the evening glow, when the last touches of sunlight have quitted the domes and towers of the city, when the shadows

are thickening around, and the streets are beginning to glow with the clustered lights of shops and cafés, then the sunbeams still rest on the latticed sides of the monster tower; and then the shadow of the world's round rim creeps slowly upwards, mounts from one gallery to another, and finally wraps the whole in shade.

Before long we may be making excursions to see the sun rise, from the top of the Eiffel Tower.

## OUR LADY-HELP.

### A COMPLETE STORY.

"ALFRED, please do attend to what I am saying," my wife began, in that tone of scarcely suppressed irritability which, in the early hours of the day, seems to come so naturally to married ladies. "Charlie is really too old to be left with Margery any longer. The child will be seven to-morrow; we must make some change."

We were sitting at breakfast. It was the twenty-first of March. I remember the date well, for, when my wife addressed me, I had in my hand the publisher's account for bringing out my little volume of poems, and its amount had proved a shock to my feelings.

"Certainly, dear, I think you are right," I replied, my thoughts still fixed upon the bill.

"He has quite caught Margery's atrocious accent. Alfred, what is the use of my talking to you?"

"My dear Arabelle, I am listening to every word you say"—"Margery's accent" had revealed to me that Mrs. Fortescue was going through one of her periodic panics concerning the ignorance of her youngest child—"the boy should have a governess."

"How can you be so thoughtless? Really, Alfred, any one would think, to hear you talk, that you had no natural feeling. You know Dr. Rouston-Rouston says that it would be positively dangerous for the dear boy to touch a book for the next two years at least."

"Why on earth, then, are you worrying about him? The little fellow is all right with Margery."

At this I was overwhelmed with reproaches. I was told that I neglected my child shamefully; that it was well for him he had a mother to take care of him, and

many another of those home truths which it seems the fate of good-tempered, easy-going men to have cast at them. The upshot of the matter was that my wife declared her intention of having a lady-help.

I was amused at the idea—the word seemed to suggest such a queer anomaly—but I did not object. The question concerned Charlie much more than me, I thought.

"Yes, that might be a solution of the difficulty; only, for Heaven's sake, Arabella, do let her be decently good-looking. Your new housemaid is too ghastly. Jenkins almost choked with laughter when he saw her the other night."

That was all I said, not a word more; and yet to this day it is commonly believed in our family circle, not only that it was I who wished to engage a lady-help, but also that I insisted upon her being young and beautiful!

I had heard nothing more of the affair for some days when, returning one evening from the office, my wife greeted me with a radiant smile.

"Alfred, I have been so fortunate! Annie Lascelles called this afternoon, and she knows of the very thing we want. She is the daughter of a curate down in Devonshire, and is just as good and sweet as she can be. She is little more than a child herself, so she will be a delightful companion for Charlie."

At first, I had felt rather mystified as to what "the very thing that was the daughter of a curate" might be; but, at the allusion to Charlie, it dawned upon me: of course, it was the lady-help again. And, sure enough, one morning, about a week later, I found a tall, delicate-looking girl sitting at the breakfast-table. She gave me a shy, timid little bow, and seemed rather frightened when I would shake hands with her.

"She is really not bad-looking," I remember thinking to myself. "In fact, if she were less white and trembling, she would be almost pretty."

Her features were delicate and refined, and her small, well-shaped head was covered with a perfect wealth of silky, blue-black curls, cut short like a boy's. Still, she was certainly not attractive; she never raised her eyes from the table, and seemed so manifestly ill at ease, that it gave me quite an uncomfortable sensation to look at her.

In these early days, I saw very little of

our lady-help, for we had a new head in our department at the office, who was making our lives a burden, so I was rarely at home.

One afternoon, however, I managed to get off a little earlier than usual, and walked across that rather desolate part of Kensington Gardens that lies between the Round Pond and Birdcage Walk. It was completely deserted; not a creature was to be seen. I was walking along on the soft, smooth grass, when suddenly some one from behind a tree almost sprang into my arms. She—for it was a lady—came with such velocity, that it was by the merest chance in the world we did not both fall to the ground. As a simple measure of precaution, I was obliged to support her. For one moment she lay in my arms, panting and breathless; and as I looked down into her face, I thought I had never seen a more lovely creature. What eyes! What a colour! I did not know her in the least, and yet in some indefinite way she recalled a face that I had seen, though I could not have said where or when.

At that moment Charlie's shrill, childish voice rang through the air:

"Papa, papa, I say, that isn't fair. You have just spoilt the game. How could Lily run when you stood in her way?"

It flashed into my mind that Miss Lilian Bollitho was the name of our lady-help! But who in this nymph, with dishevelled hair, flushed cheeks, and eyes flashing with life and gaiety, would ever have recognised the pale, die-away creature whom I was accustomed to see at breakfast?

Whether Miss Bollitho found me less formidable than my wife, I cannot say; but certainly, now that I was alone, her manner showed none of that painful nervousness that usually characterised her. She was still very shy, but not awkwardly so; on the contrary, there was something rather taking in the way she would raise her great, brown eyes for one moment to my face, and then let them fall, as if startled at their own audacity.

I walked home with her, Charlie gambolling on in front. Just as we were coming out of the Park gate we met Frank Bristowe, my wife's rather disreputable brother-in-law, and I was considerably annoyed at the look of undisguised amusement he cast at us in passing.

My wife and I had arranged to go to the theatre that evening; but, at about six o'clock, we had a note from my sister who was to have accompanied us, begging us to

use her ticket, as she could not. I suggested that we should take Miss Bollitho with us. My wife caught at the idea.

"The very thing. I have been wishing I could give the poor child a little pleasure; but I didn't like to suggest it as I knew you disliked her, though I don't know how you can, for she is so good to Charlie. You won't mind her dining with us just for once?"

When Miss Bollitho came down dressed for the theatre she really was a perfect little picture, so quaint and pretty did she look in her queer short-waisted gown, made of some soft silky stuff covered with birds and flowers, evidently an old family relic. Her pretty, girlish neck was uncovered, and she wore white-silk spider-web mittens, such as were in fashion some hundred years ago. Her cheeks were flushed, and her eyes were sparkling with subdued excitement, as if she felt the gods were favouring her more than she deserved.

My wife looked at her with real, honest pleasure in her eyes.

"How can you think that girl plain?" she said to me when we were alone for a moment. This was in allusion to a remark of mine the day I first saw our lady-help. "I never shall understand what you men admire in a woman. I think she is perfectly lovely."

So did I, but I had not the time to confess it; so did a good many other people in the Lyceum that night. As I noted the glances of admiration that were cast at her, I really felt proud of my beautiful young charge; and, no doubt, my manner to her was just a trifle warm, although, of course, only in a fatherly sort of way. Mrs. Fortescue must have noticed this, I think, for she seemed slightly annoyed; but she said nothing, unless, indeed, her rather tart remark about the greyness of my moustache had some bearing on the point.

Now it so happened that my wife took cold that night, and was laid up with a swollen face and inflammation of the glands. Miss Bollitho and myself were therefore in some degree thrown upon each other for companionship. She made breakfast for me, and now that she had lost her white, scared look, she, and the great urn behind which she sat, made a very pretty picture. She always made my coffee exactly to my taste. No matter how late I might be, I always found hot rolls and cutlets waiting. In a word, she showered

down upon me all those little acts of kindly courtesy which it is so pleasant to receive from the hands of a lady. In our early married days my wife had done the same; but that was before children appeared upon the scene. I will confess that I soon began really to like our lady-help. I liked her quaint, old-fashioned ways, her little friendly attentions; and why the deuce should I not have liked them? A man of forty—my wife takes care I do not forget my age; it is the same as hers—may surely like a pretty little thing young enough to be his daughter. Why, if Frank, our eldest boy, had lived, he would have been almost as old as Lily.

Under the gentle influence of our lady-help, breakfast became really a pleasant meal. We all chatted together, and Charlie's odd reflections furnished an inexhaustible subject for laughter. One morning when I, as usual, went up to see my wife before starting for the office, I found her more glum than ever. Instead of replying to my greeting, she enquired, in a sepulchral tone, what there was in the "Times"? As she spoke, I suddenly remembered that I had never looked into it. I had, however, just presence of mind enough not to confess the fact, for my reading at breakfast was one of my wife's standing grievances, and I would not for the world have let her know that I had not been doing it of late.

"In the 'Times'?" I replied, with as much coolness as I could summon; "oh, nothing special. Bulgaria is again to the fore; and, as usual, they have been bull-baiting Balfour."

"Margery, please go and fetch the 'Times' Mr. Fortescue has left in the breakfast-room."

Like lightning it shot through my mind that the "Times" was probably uncut, just as it had been left at the door.

"I am afraid I must go."

I began preparing to beat a retreat.

"Alfred, may I beg that you will favour me with your company for a few minutes? I will not detain you long."

"Favour!" "Detain!" This looked serious.

Margery brought the "Times," evidently untouched. Not a word. One glance from the paper to my face was all Mrs. Fortescue vouchsafed. I felt most uncomfortable; but decided that it would be too undignified to offer an explanation, even if I had had one ready.

"Breakfast is quite a gay meal now," my

wife continued, always in the same sepulchral tone. What a fool I was to have forgotten she was just over the breakfast-room! "I am afraid I must be a sad wet blanket, for there are no such bursts of merriment when I am there. I suppose that is why you used to read the 'Times'?"

The pause that ensued was terrible.

"Alfred, I don't like to give the servants unnecessary trouble. Is there any use in their putting a fire in the smoking-room now that you spend your evenings in the schoolroom?"

"What are you driving at, Arabelle?"

"Oh, nothing. Of course the servants will make remarks; but if you don't mind, I am sure I don't."

"Mind what? Do try to speak more plainly. I don't understand a word of what you are saying." The "Ancient Mariner's" glittering eye was nothing to the orb my wife fixed on me. "Arabelle, this is really too absurd. Are you making all this fuss because I went into the school-room last night to give a book to Lily?"

"Lily!"

Mrs. Fortescue almost shrieked the name.

"Miss Bollitho, I mean, of course. Charlie always calls her——"

"May I ask whether Miss Bollitho also calls you Alfred?" she enquired in a lofty, indifferent manner.

"Certainly not. It is an insult to the girl to ask the question. I will not listen to such outrageous folly," and I strode away, feeling as if I had scored a point.

How the deuce did my wife know that I had been in the schoolroom the night before? Not that I cared, of course; why should I? It was the simplest accident in the world. The way it happened was this. The thing I abhor most in the world is sitting for hour after hour with not a soul to speak to. Now, that evening, I had dined alone. I had been up to Arabelle's room, and found it perfectly stifling—the temperature would have given me a fit of apoplexy in five minutes—and as I was wandering up and down the hall, undecided whether to hunt up Jenkins or to go to the club, I noticed that the schoolroom door was a little open. I glanced in. There was Miss Bollitho—pretty and fresh as a flower—her whole heart and soul fixed upon the book she was reading; and the book was my book, my own little volume of poems! Seized with an irresistible longing to know which she was reading, I went softly into the

room. Ah! it was my special favourite, the poem I loved best, "Parted."

Now, during the eighteen years we had lived together, my one serious cause of complaint against my wife had been that she was always trying to damp my literary aspirations. As she herself confessed, she had no taste for poetry, and from the day that we were married, she had stoutly refused to read a line of mine. Once, when I had insisted upon reading "Parted" to her, she had absolutely laughed in the midst of the most pathetic verse.

Tears were standing on Lily's dark lashes. Her confusion at being detected weeping over a love-poem was the prettiest thing imaginable. I took the book from her hand. What poet would have done less? I read to her some little sonnets, which I considered, perhaps, the best things I had done. Nothing grand, you know, but pathetic: the sort of thing a girl would like.

I remember, now, most of those I read turned on the sorrow of losing those whom we love, and, in the midst of one which described how a young soldier, whilst dying on a battle-field, fancies that his fiancée is by his side, poor Lily—tender-hearted little thing that she is—sobbed aloud. Could I ever doubt again that my poems had the ring of truth?

As I watched the girl's unfeigned emotion; noticed her varying colour; the expression of her great, dark eyes changing with every thought; I felt for the first time that I had found one who understood me; felt, too, that I had in me the making of a true poet, and that hers was the touch which was to call to life the poetic flame.

A really sympathetic listener is a rare avis; no wonder that was a happy evening. Poor child! she told me she had never spoken to a real poet before; and her wondering gratitude as I read to her was quite touching—her lisping murmurs of admiration, in my ear delicious. The hours flew only too quickly, and we were both equally startled when midnight struck.

"I had no idea it was ten o'clock," Lily cried in dismay. "I have had such a happy evening. How shall I thank you?"

And, with the prettiest air of mingled shyness and devotion, she just touched my fingers with her lips. For the moment I swear I felt the "Immortal" she believed me to be. I had planned half-a-dozen such



evenings, and here was this absurd folly of my wife's just going to spoil everything. Our new chief was away that morning, so there was nothing going on in the office, and I tossed off several little things which I could not but feel were better than anything I had written before. Miss Bollitho's name was a splendid one for rhyming. Lilian, Liliias, Lilia, Lily, why, there was no end to the variations of which it was capable. One poem that I wrote I determined to give to her. It was, perhaps, a thought tender; but then, after all, she was little more than a child, so it didn't matter. When I had finished this, I thought of her as I had seen her the night before, listening with rapt attention whilst I read; and, as the picture rose before my mind, poetic fervour took possession of my soul; a power stronger than myself forced me to write. I dreamed that I was twenty, and that she—I called her Lily—was mine, my life, my all. It was a passionate love-poem; but what of that? Did not Dante and Petrarca write love-poems to women who were not their wives? In me, as in them, the poet and the man are distinct; the one adored a lovely vision, the other never wronged his wife even in thought.

That afternoon I again met Miss Bollitho and Charlie. I could not help thinking that she was expecting me, she was so prettily confused when I appeared, and seemed to have something she wished to say to me. Just as we were beginning to talk, that hateful Frank Bristowe joined us. I was thoroughly angry, for the fellow is a cad, and was evidently bent on forcing me to introduce him to Lily. To put a stop to his impertinence, I proposed that he and I should walk on together. No sooner had we left the other two behind than he turned upon me, roaring with laughter.

"Ah! ah! Mr. Joseph, that is how you pass your time now that your wife is fast in bed, is it? Ah! ah! I saw your little game the other day. It's the best joke in the world. That sweet, confiding way she was looking up into your face was quite touching, whilst as for you—ah! ah! To think of Alfred Fortescue proving a gay Lothario. It was deuced mean of you, though, not to introduce me, for she is an uncommon pretty girl."

My blood boiled. This fellow, who was barely tolerated in the family, to presume to address me in this hail-fellow-well-met fashion, as if we were on terms of equality! It was a gross piece of impertinence, and

I told him so. But he only laughed the more.

"Don't be angry, old fellow," he called out, as I strode away. "You should choose a more secluded place for your rendezvous if you mind being seen. Ha, ha! What a joke!"

I had not lost sight of him five minutes, before it flashed across my mind that it was the day my father-in-law entertained all his family at dinner. I had already declined going, but Bristowe would be sure to be there; and my hair stood on end as I thought of what a picture he might draw of our encounter.

I dined at my club, and did not return home until every one was in bed. Margery waylaid me as I was going down to breakfast next morning:

"Master Charlie would tell you, sir, when you met him and Miss Bollitho in the Park"—good Heavens! did spies dog my steps?—"that missus was very bad yesterday. Really, sir, I was quite afeard, she suffered so awful, poor dear."

Now I value Margery highly; but really her tone was too impertinent—it seemed to imply that I was in some way responsible for my wife's sufferings. I strode past her without a word, for I chose that she should see that I was displeased.

Again, during breakfast, Lily seemed to have something on her mind; but, each time she was on the point of speaking, her courage appeared to fail her. I was quite curious to know what she wished to say.

That afternoon Charlie was accompanied, not by Lily, but by old Margery, who chuckled with unconcealed triumph when I met them, as if she read my disappointment on my face. I could not walk with the boy when that woman was there, so I went home alone. The housemaid told me that Mrs. Fortescue was asleep, and did not wish to be disturbed. And yet I distinctly heard voices coming from her room.

"Well, if she does not wish to see me," I thought, "I will not force myself upon her."

Now I really was not feeling well that day. I think I had had a chill. The fire had gone out in the breakfast-room, and the smoking-room was like a grave.

"There's a nice fire in the schoolroom, sir," the housemaid said, "if you would please wait there until I light this fire."

I was shivering with cold, so, without a moment's thought, I opened the schoolroom door, and, as I did so, I was startled by



hearing low, convulsive sobs, as from some one in an agony of grief; they were really heartrending.

"Miss Bollitho—Lily, what is the matter?" I exclaimed, frightened at the intensity of the girl's distress.

She sprang up wildly, and seized my arm.

"Oh, Mr. Fortescue, I was afraid I should not see you! I did so wish to meet you in the Park, and they would not let me come. I thought I should have died." And she sobbed hysterically, still clinging to my arm.

Had the girl gone mad? I put my arm around her to steady her to the sofa; but, before we had advanced one step, a majestic figure thrust me aside, seized the letter Miss Bollitho was pressing into my hand, and turned and confronted me. It was my mother-in-law. She must have heard every word that had been said. Lily's shriek of terror, when she saw her letter in the hand of that woman, recalled me to a sense of my duty.

"Mrs. Montgore, that letter is not yours, give it to me at once!" I said, in a voice which I in vain tried to render commanding.

"You villain, I would die first!" she screamed. "As for you, you hussy"—I always had had a suspicion that my mother-in-law, if excited, would be vulgar—"you good-for-nothing—"

I seized her by the arm, and tried to take the letter.

"Help! murder!" she shrieked. "Help! help!"

To this day I do not understand how it happened; but, at that moment, my wife, my father-in-law, my brother Jack, his wife, Bristowe, nay, half the relatives I have in the world, burst into the room. Mr. Montgore seemed to understand the scene at a glance. He took the letter from his wife's hand, put it into his pocket, ushered us out of the room and locked the door, leaving Miss Bollitho within. This done, he led the way into the dining-room, sat down at the head of the table, pointed to me to take the chair opposite, begged the others to sit down, reduced his wife to silence—no easy task—and then began, very much in the tone which judges adopt when addressing condemned criminals:

"Alfred Fortescue, I need scarcely tell you that this has come upon us all as a most painful blow; the more painful, perhaps, from being unexpected. I have trusted you, and where I have once trusted I do not lightly withdraw my trust; therefore,

I insist upon a calm and dispassionate investigation of this most painful affair before I can consent to your being treated as one unworthy of being my son-in-law, the husband of my daughter."

At this, Arabelle sobbed aloud; her mother furtively shook her fist; even Jack and his wife looked grave; whilst, as for the others, with the exception of Bristowe, who chuckled, they all simply glowered. But I was too stunned to care. I had the dull, vacant feeling of being in a dream.

"You are accused of carrying on a vulgar intrigue with a young person who is living under your roof. (May I beg that you will not interrupt me?) You are accused, I repeat, of carrying on a vulgar intrigue with this young person, and the following facts are advanced as proofs of the accusation:

"First.—Systematic neglect of your own wife, notably one evening at the Lyceum.

"Second.—Indulging in jokes and undue familiarity with the said young person during breakfast.

"Third.—Being alone with her, under suspicious circumstances, at an unseemly hour of the night.

"Fourth.—Meeting her by appointment in the Park.

"Fifth.—Carrying on a clandestine correspondence with the same.

"Sixth.—Allowing her to kiss you."

"I saw it with my own eyes," called out old Margery, whom I now first observed to be amongst the spectators.

"He was clasping her in his arms when I entered the room," cried Mrs. Montgore.

"Silence," said Mr. Montgore, sternly. Then, turning to me: "What have you to say in reply to these charges?"

"The whole thing is an infernal concoction," I replied, by this time thoroughly angry. "A villainous slander, invented by spiteful, jealous old women, who hate the girl because she is young and pretty."

My wife and her mother sprang to their feet; but Mr. Montgore again reduced them to silence.

"I understand that you deny the charge?"

"Yes, I do. It is an insult to ask the question."

"You do not, I suppose, deny that this letter"—taking out of his pocket the one his wife had seized from Lily—"was intended for you? Do you object to my reading it?"

"The letter is mine, and I refuse to allow you to read it."

"It will be a question for counsel later to decide whether or not the letter can be admitted as evidence; but, in any case, I will make a note of your protest against its being read."

He deliberately broke the seal, read the first lines, and then, looking at me keenly, said:

"You acknowledge that this letter is addressed to you?"

"Yes."

"This simplifies matters considerably. Arabelle, I should recommend your going to your room. No? Very well; perhaps it is as well that you should know the truth at once."

And in his usual metallic, lawyer-like voice, he began to read the letter:

"My own darling, my love! Since my lips last rested on yours."

My brain reeled. What followed I never knew, excepting that it was a wild, fervent love-letter, which no woman could have written excepting under the influence of an all-absorbing passion which she knew to be shared by the man to whom she was writing. Again and again she thanked me for my love, and swore that, although for the moment all seemed against us, she would yet be mine.

"Love," she said, "is immortal; but those who stand between us will perish."

"Arabelle, that's you. They are plotting to murder you."

This suggestion, of course, came from Mrs. Montgore. My wife had a violent fit of hysterics, her sister Maria shook the poker at me. The whole scene was too unutterably horrible; it haunts me to this day.

It was some time before even Mr. Montgore could restore order. His voice was more cutting than ever as he remarked:

"After reading the letter, I do not wonder at your protest. May I ask if you have received many such letters from this young person?"

I was too stunned to reply. I could only shake my head.

"I remember you always carry a letter-book in your pocket; will you allow me to examine it? I must warn you, however, that you are not bound to incriminate yourself."

Scarcely conscious of what I was doing, I handed him the book. He gave a slight grunt as he turned over the leaves; evidently there was nothing in it of interest. How could there be, when I only kept it

for office-work? Suddenly he paused, put his hand to his throat, as if threatened with apoplexy, and, for one moment, his feelings as a man overcoming his instincts as a lawyer, he literally gnashed his teeth with rage as he shook some papers in my face. Then my heart stood still, for I saw that he held in his hand my love-poem—the one written whilst the poetic fervour was upon me. I could bear no more. I rushed from the room—from the house, Jack following me, clinging to my arm. I tried to shake him off, and wished madly that the Thames were near to put an end to my misery.

"I say, Alf, don't attract a crowd. People think you are mad. No, you shan't shake me off; I shall stick to you, bad lot though you be." And, partly by persuasion, partly by force, he conveyed me to his house.

"Now, Alfred," he said to me, a few hours later, when I had become more calm, "do you mean to say you didn't know the girl cared for you?"

"I—I——" Lily's shy, tender blushes rose before my mind, and, try as I would, I could not stifle a feeling of gratification that, in spite of my years, I should have inspired one so young and lovely with so fervent a passion.

"H'm! In that case, the sooner you and I start for Norway, the better," Jack remarked, with an angry grunt.

His wife agreed with him, and it was in vain that I argued and struggled. She, divining why I hesitated, told me she would take care of Miss Bollitho; in fact, would go and fetch her home as soon as we were out of the house.

Four days later we were in Bergen, I, at least, feeling very low and depressed. My wife's face, as I had last seen it, haunted me. I thought of little Charlie, and could have cried. Even the remembrance of the "grande passion" I had inspired, failed to comfort me. "What business had girls to have 'grandes passions' for married men?" I asked, angrily.

A letter was brought in. It was from Lottie—Jack's wife.

"Come back at once," she wrote. "What a parcel of geese we have been! Lily Bollitho—whom I have just handed over to her father's keeping—is madly in love with a penniless young officer, to whom she is engaged. That letter was for him; your part was to find out the young man's address at the Horse Guards, as his last letter had fallen into Mr.

Bollitho's hands, who had burnt it. Thursday was the day for the mail, hence her excitement. Your wife is so delighted at this discovery, that she seems to have forgotten all about the poems. Come at once."

I was relieved, but a little disappointed too, and we returned by the next boat.

## WITH COMPOUND INTEREST.

A STORY IN FOUR CHAPTERS.  
BY LUCIE WALKER.

### CHAPTER I.

"My dear Ursula," exclaimed the master, a little impatiently, "that performance is as poor and expressionless as a performance well can be. When are you going to begin to grasp the spirit of this movement?"

"I really can't say," replied the pupil, indifferently; "it is so deadly uninteresting, that it does not seem as if one could put any spirit into it."

"Do not throw the blame on the music," rejoined the master; "it is yourself who are at fault. A year ago you would have delighted in the effort to comprehend this. Now you seem to have lost all ambition to excel in your art."

The girl smiled. She had a beautiful face, and her smile made it still more beautiful.

"You are quite right, Felix," she said, "my ambition seems to have died a natural death. Now, don't sigh and look so desperately unhappy; if I take it coolly, why should not you?"

"Because I think of your future. If you were an independent woman, a want of perseverance would be sad enough; but you cannot afford to neglect your talent, and your opportunities for cultivating it. Your final examination is to take place in less than three months!"

"So you often remind me; but what if, after all, I do not intend to go in for the final examination?"

"Ursula," interrupted her master, "you would not be so foolish! I cannot tell you what a bitter disappointment it would be to me."

Ursula smiled again.

"But why should I grind for an examination, when I assure you that I would rather be a nursemaid, or starve outright, than be a professional musician?"

"You used not to say so."

"People learn by experience. I have

long wished to say this to you; I have gone on working to please you and mother. My work has been poor, and you have been dissatisfied, because my heart has not been in it."

"Is that your own idea, or has the suggestion come to you from outside?" he asked, looking searchingly into her face.

"And why should it be a suggestion?" rejoined the girl. "Why may not one have an original idea?"

"It is odd," said the master, more to himself than to his pupil; "here is a talent which might be brought to the very highest pitch of perfection, linked to a character with as much backbone as a jelly-fish. Truly, there are strange combinations in nature."

"Don't be cross, Felix," said the girl; "I'll play it again, if you like, and try to make it sound better. Shall I? Just to soothe your ruffled spirits."

So the pupil resumed her uncongenial task, and the master continued his corrections, while the afternoon sun, streaming in through the three windows of the long, narrow room, revealed with ungenerous directness the shabbiness of the interior, and of all the furniture, excepting only the grand piano at which the two sat, and of which the handsome solidity contrasted brusquely with the littered writing-table, the decrepit chairs, the disorderly accumulation of pipes, photographs, busts, and cards on the mantelpiece.

The only thing in the room, besides the sunshine and the piano, which was bright and fresh, was a handsome frame, which broke the monotony of the faded wallpaper. It contained a diploma setting forth, with many calligraphical flourishes, that, "Herr Felix Martin, born an Englishman, had won such and such honours at the Conservatorium of Leipzig, together with the degree of Doctor of Music."

The shabby, nondescript room, with its uncomfortable contrasts, formed an excellent background for the personage whom Ursula Armitage called Felix, and of whose history the diploma on the wall gave a cursory outline. His age, calculated by that communicative document, was a few months less than thirty; he was small and thin, and his meagre, stooping figure was set off to the least possible advantage by well-worn, badly-cut clothes. His face was keen and intellectual; his eyes, brightened a little just now by irritation, were large and beautiful; but his expression was that of a man dissatisfied with himself and at

variance with his surroundings; in fact, he himself was one of those strange combinations of Nature's harmonies, and the light of his genius seemed worthier of a more attractive lamp than that in which it burned.

"Time's up, Felix, isn't it?" said Ursula, at last, looking round as she reached the desired haven of a finale.

"No," replied Martin; "you trifled so much time away at the beginning, that we must make up for it."

"Come, come," said Ursula, pleadingly. "You are in a terribly bad humour. I must try to appease you. Now, do be kind, and let me off. I am quite worn out with my labours." And she closed her book, while her master shook his head and muttered something about wilfulness. "Now I'm going to tidy you up a little before I go," she continued; "I can't think how it is your room always looks so comfortless. The other part of the house is cosy enough. Yours is bleakness itself."

"It is this glare of light," he said, nonchalantly. "It makes everything look threadbare. A bright day always reminds me of my own poverty."

"Being poor is a great bore, isn't it?" returned Ursula. "If we were not poor, I might have a talent for music with impunity, no one would insist on my going in for a career. Oh, if I might only be King Midas for a moment!"

"You!" said Martin, drily; "you are more likely to make gold vanish, than to call it into existence. You take after your father."

"You do not say that as if you meant it for a compliment."

"You may take it as you choose."

"Oh, well, father is very clever."

"Yes."

"And handsome and agreeable."

"Very."

"He has been unfortunate; which is not his fault, poor dear. Fancy you blaming any one for having bad luck!"

"Bad luck," said Felix, grimly, "is often another word for bad management."

"I suppose you speak of yourself?" said Ursula. "You cannot, of course, know how father has managed."

"Of course."

"And if you feel your luck does not come because you have managed badly, why do you not go away from us poor, shabby, broken-down people, and see if you can get on better elsewhere?"

"My dear Ursula, replied Felix, "you are talking nonsense. Your mother's house has been my home ever since I can remember. People do not ask a professor of music where and how he lives."

The girl's face flushed; this was not precisely the answer she had expected.

"I see," she said, with a laugh, "I was over-generous in trying to shoulder a responsibility which does not concern me. Of course, a musician generally does live among Bohemians; and the castles in the air, which you used to build at Leipzig, are as likely to be realised among us in Bohemia, as anywhere else. Do you recollect what fine castles they were, Felix?"

"I recollect nothing about them," he replied, as he turned to his writing-table and began to turn over the loose papers; "every lad talks nonsense about his future."

"Have you lost something?" she asked, as she moved to go. "What are you looking for? Shall I help you?"

"No, thanks," he answered, brusquely; "neither you nor I will find here, or elsewhere, what I have lost."

"Ah," cried Ursula, with the air of wishing to change the subject, "I wonder what the postman brought half an hour ago? I must go and find mother."

Ursula Armitage had, with perfect justice, used the name of the metaphorical locality, Bohemia, in speaking of her home. In reality she lived in a semi-detached villa, of which the postal address was "Leonora Lodge, Philistia Park, Blackheath"; but which, since the Armitages had become its tenants, had assumed—from the basement where old Antoine, the French manservant, reigned supreme, to the attic where Mrs. Armitage's yellow-backed French novels lay tied in bundles like tares for the burning—an air of having struck out a line for itself, which the adjacent houses neither appreciated nor imitated.

The head of the house, Mr. Ffolliott Armitage, added more to this Bohemian odour by his absence than his presence. He was reported to live chiefly abroad; but for what reason, and why without his wife and family, had not transpired, and afforded a fine field for conjecture to the inquisitive. On the rare occasions of his visits to Leonora Lodge, he was observed to be a well-favoured, fashionably-dressed man, somewhat over forty. Those who had spoken with him reported him well-bred and well-informed, with a touch of



French polish on the most winning of manners. The climate of Bohemia appeared to have suited him far better than it had suited his wife.

Mrs. Armitage had, undoubtedly, once been handsome, but was now only strong-featured. The many furrows of her face, together with the aroma of bygone prosperity which clung to her gowns and bonnets, would, in some women, have been a claim to compassion. Mrs. Armitage, however, made no such claim. She had seen life under many aspects; she had often been forced to adapt herself to disagreeable emergencies; her experience had written itself out on her forehead and round her mouth in cruel, indelible lines; but she made no confidences to outsiders, nor did she reckon her husband's absence among her trials. Her love for him, never very passionate, had long since died and been buried; its grave was almost forgotten; its very ghost had ceased to walk. All her affection was centred on her bright, wilful, impetuous daughter; all her dependence clung to her adopted son, Felix Martin, who had been in her times of need and loneliness even more than an only son. When she looked at these two, she felt she had still something to hope for, and much to be thankful for, though she had begun life on very different terms with society, and had married Ffolliott Armitage with far other expectations and hopes than those she was realising.

That February afternoon, while Ursula was reluctantly taking her music lesson, Mrs. Armitage sat reading a letter over and over again. The envelope bore the postmark "Toulon," and its contents ran thus:

"DEAREST NAN,—I write this from a spot so charming, that I must not begin to describe it." ("As much enthusiasm for new places as of old," put in Mrs. Armitage.) "Imagine, Nan, a villa, perfection in itself, nesting on a pine-clad slope within earshot of the murmur of the dazzling Mediterranean. Imagine me, the poor, battered soldier of fortune, enjoying the hospitality of the most charming of women, la Baronne di Loscagno, whose acquaintance, with that of her equally charming nephew, I made at Nice. They invited me so urgently, that it would have been ungracious to decline; and here I have been for a week, revelling in their charming society and in the beauty of the place. I cannot tell how the change has soothed me after the worries I have had over my speculation in olives, which did

not succeed as well as I hoped it would. Would you mind writing to Carey, and asking him to let me have another two hundred on those houses of yours? Or it might be a good idea to sell the smallest of the three. What do you think? You are a better man of business than I am.

"By the way, the Baroness talks of wanting an English companion; a pleasant girl, with a decent French accent, and who could do something in the musical line. It strikes me that our darling Ursula, with her long residence abroad, and her musical gifts, seems just cut out for the place. The poor pet will have to fight her own battle in life; she gets no chance of seeing the world, living shut up as she does." ("I wonder who is to blame for that," interposed Mrs. Armitage again.) "The Baroness would give her a liberal salary, and introduce her to a large circle of people. If my wishes count for anything—I may say, if I am to have any voice in the settlement of the child's future—you will at once give your consent, and renounce that musical castle in the air, of which you know I disapprove.

"Yours, F. A.

"P.S.—Since writing the above, I have had a confab with the Baroness; she is wild to have the darling at once. Antoine can bring her as far as Paris.

"P.P.S.—I see I have omitted to say that on the Baroness's estate is a valuable quarry of green marble, which formerly brought immense wealth to the owner. I am busy trying whether it will be possible to recommence the quarrying."

"Umph," said Mrs. Armitage, when she had read and re-read this letter. "Among the many ambiguous letters I have received with the signature, 'F. A.,' this is by no means the least ambiguous;" then, with a look of doubt and distrust on her face, she carried the letter down to the kitchen, where old Antoine was getting his preparations for dinner under weigh.

"Madame has news from Monsieur," he said, as his mistress entered.

"Yes, Antoine, at last; but go on with your vegetables, it needn't make dinner late."

"It is not good news, Madame?"

"Neither good nor bad; it is the old story. Nothing worse."

"Ah!" said the old man, sharply; "then, with Madame's permission, I call it bad enough. Monsieur has found a new speculation; all is couleur de rose. Monsieur asks for money?"

"Your guesses, Antoine, are like divination. The olive speculation has failed. Monsieur wants a little money because he has formed plans for making another fortune."

"But, with Madame's permission, that is not all," said Antoine. "Madame is too accustomed to this to look troubled over it."

"Here, you can read it," said Mrs. Armitage. "I can't settle the question alone."

It took the old man a long time to spell out the dashing scrawl which his mistress handed to him. When he reached the end, he folded the letter slowly and replaced it in the envelope.

"Well?" queried Mrs. Armitage.

"Well, Madame, if the house property is sold, Monsieur will fling the price into the marble quarry; and, after all, no marble will be dug. Ah, Madame," he went on with energy, "it would be a happy day for us all, if somebody or something would put a stop to these wonderful ventures of Monsieur's, which ought to make him rich, but which only load him with debt." And Antoine dashed his carrots into the saucepan, with a vigour which would have augured ill for Monsieur if it had been possible to dispose of him and his vagaries in the same summary manner.

"Never mind the quarry, Antoine, we will take that for granted; the important point is about Mademoiselle."

Antoine was Norman; he reserved his opinion on momentous points. "Madame is right," he said, "it is far more important. It will be such a change for Mademoiselle to go and live among the roses and pine-trees in the South."

"If she goes! But perhaps she has something better to do than to go so far at the whim of a capricious Frenchwoman."

"Then Madame will refuse the offer of Madame la Baronne?"

"I don't know," said Mrs. Armitage, perplexedly. "My impulse is to say no, at once and finally. Why does he propose it?"

"Does not the letter explain, Madame?"

"Antoine," said Mrs. Armitage, "you believe in that explanation no more than I do. When has Monsieur ever before concerned himself with his daughter's future? Has he ever troubled himself with the burden of his responsibility?"

Antoine shrugged his shoulders.

"It may occur to Monsieur," he replied, "that Mademoiselle is of an age to settle in life."

"Antoine," interrupted his mistress, sharply, "why do you say that?"

"Because, Madame, I observed that there was mention made of a certain charming nephew."

"Nephew!" cried Ursula, from the doorway. "Whose nephew engrosses you while I have been seeking you all over the house? I was longing to know if there was a letter from father at last. There is, I see; so don't try to hide it, and then make me guess. I can also see, by the way Antoine is peeling those onions, that you have been telling him something highly interesting, if not tragic. Was 'the nephew' the hero of the story? And whose nephew is he?"

"My dear Ursula," said Mrs. Armitage, "you talk at random. Your father's letter is to me on business."

"Nevertheless," said Ursula, "you have shown it to Antoine."

"That is a different matter."

"Not at all, my dear mother. If Antoine may read what father has told you about some one's nephew, so may I; so come upstairs and gratify my curiosity." Mrs. Armitage glanced at Antoine. "Now I won't allow any secret signs," went on Ursula. "I shall read the letter from beginning to end. I want to see how much money father has made by his olives, and when he is coming home to pay off these clamorous tradesmen. Antoine, you will spoil the soup unless you give your mind to it."

With which valediction Ursula led her mother upstairs.

"Ah!" soliloquised Antoine, as the door closed behind them, "it is Mademoiselle who knows how to get her own way; she is the true daughter of Monsieur. I may as well begin to think of accompanying her to Paris."

Antoine's long experience had not led him to a wrong conclusion. To Ursula, her father's proposal seemed to offer a prospect of release from a disagreeable position which she could by no means turn away from. It had come so opportunely; it was so inviting, so unlikely to recur.

Mrs. Armitage, though her judgement urged her to refuse, was too pliable in the hands of those she loved to resist her daughter; and when Ursula had pleaded with her, coaxed her, scolded her, and pouted with her for a couple of days, she surrendered at discretion.

Within a fortnight the day of departure had arrived, and Ursula's boxes were being

packed with such an outfit as could be managed in the exhausted state of the Armitage exchequer.

"Don't fret over the bills, mother," said Ursula, as Mrs. Armitage, with a sad face, folded the new dresses. "It will be an excellent investment. I shall now be able to buy dresses for myself, and shoes, and bonnets, and everything."

"The bills don't worry me, dear. There are so many already, that a few more will be scarcely noticeable."

"Oh, well," cried Ursula, cheerfully, "if you are too philosophical to brood over possible bankruptcy, pray don't let any minor evil, such as the loss of me, weigh down your spirits. I have suffered enough already from the gloom which Felix affects over my departure. Now, mother, you must confess that he has made himself perfectly odious about it."

"He thinks it is not a wise move, dear; and you know Felix never hides his opinion."

"He doesn't; yet he might have the good taste to do so until it is asked for. Oh, mother, if Felix might only have ceased to live with you, before I come back!"

"Before you come back! Why, suppose you and the Baroness do not suit one another, you would be back here directly."

"I hope that may not follow on all these extravagant preparations. But, whenever I return, soon or late, I trust that you and Felix may have dissolved partnership."

"You unreasonable child. Do you forget all that I owe to Felix's staunchness in some of our worst troubles?"

"No, I don't; that is——"

"You extraordinary child! Have you forgotten all that binds Felix to me, and me to him? I hope he will never wish to leave me."

"Father is not of the same way of thinking," replied Ursula.

"That is not to the point," said Mrs. Armitage. "So long as you and I wish Felix to remain here, your father will be perfectly satisfied to allow him to do so."

"I do not speak on father's account," answered the girl. "I myself wish that Felix would leave us."

"Ursula!" cried Mrs. Armitage, "what do you mean? Have you forgotten a certain day, about three years since, when you shed floods of passionate tears because your father suggested Felix should go away and——"

"Hush, mother," cried Ursula; "I will not listen. I was a mere child then."

"You were seventeen, Ursula; you refused to be called a child at the time; you said, if you lived to be a hundred, you would never change."

"I made a mistake of which I do not care to talk. I suppose all people make mistakes sometimes, and they ought to be allowed to forget them, if they cannot otherwise undo them."

"I don't think Felix forgets."

"I'm sure he doesn't wish to remember. He would be very foolish if he did. Besides, why do you talk as if a promise had been made between Felix and me?"

"A promise would have been made if you had had your own way, dear."

"Perhaps; but thank goodness father did not let me have my own way, and there is no promise to break. Ah, mother," she broke off, suddenly, "that white dress must be folded better than that. When a person has only two evening dresses to her name, ancient history must not interfere with the packing of the best of the two."

"I see, my dear," said her mother, smiling, "we leave the ghosts alone to-day."

"Certainly, mother. What sounds more ridiculous than a ghost-story in broad daylight? Not for the travelling-bag. I take after father; I must be comfortable in a railway-carriage. You know my thousand requirements; will you put them together while I run and say good-bye to Felix, after which we shall have time for a quiet cup of tea before we go to the train."

"It is curious," thought Mrs. Armitage, as her eyes followed her daughter out of the room, "that I should never have noticed how her feelings towards Felix have changed. Can she have been influenced in this? Heaven forbid that the resemblance to her father should crop up here also."

Martin was at his writing-table when Ursula entered the room. He had been sitting there, pen in hand, all the afternoon; but a few notes of music roughly scored on the sheet before him, and then scratched out, were the sole visible result of his lucubrations.

"Waiting for an inspiration, Felix?" said Ursula, coming softly behind him.

"No; I am not waiting for anything so ethereal as an inspiration."

"For what then?"

"I have been waiting all day for you to

come at the eleventh hour and say that you have given up this wild scheme, and that you will stay with us and work on to your old aim."

Ursula's bright laugh contrasted sharply with his earnest face and voice.

"You are a droll creature, Felix," she said. "You don't seem to be able to enter into other people's feelings at all. Can't you understand that our present life is utterly irksome to a restless body like me, and that the prospect before me is charming? I am, of course, sorry to leave you all; but any change from this dulness must be for the better. I call it selfish," she went on after a short pause, which he did not break, "in you to make up your mind that your decision in the matter is my duty. At that rate I should have as many 'duties' as my friends had opinions."

"We won't re-commence the argument, Ursula. I'm sorry I insulted you by giving you credit for more judgement and wisdom than you possess."

"Do not trouble to invent such elaborately disagreeable speeches, Felix. I did not come to quarrel, but to say good-bye. Cannot you wish me good speed on what I feel to be a boon of fortune?"

Martin sighed, and looked up at her; his eyes were full of pathetic reproach.

"Well, well," he said, "we have had many differences of opinion in our time, and we have quarrelled over them to our hearts' content, but we must part friends, mustn't we?"

"Of course we must," replied Ursula, cheerfully.

"And will you remember me, when you have begun this fine new life?"

"Felix, what a question! How could I forget you?"

"Ursula," said Martin, taking her hand, and looking at her earnestly, "there are several ways of remembering. If I am not worthy of the place in your thoughts which I desire——"

"Of course, of course," she broke in hastily, "I shall always think highly of you; and when you are a famous musician it is you who will forget your unsatisfactory pupil, not your pupil who will forget you."

"Ursula," said Felix, "listen to me. Once upon a time a romantic youth fell in love with an equally romantic child. As

he watched her grow, so his love grew till it was too great and passionate to be hidden; while she was so sweet and simple that she made no secret of returning his love. However, she was so young, and he was so poor, that it would have been ridiculous to have spoken of the future; therefore he, being sure of his happiness, resolved to wait awhile. Since then time has passed, and he is scarcely further on the road to affluence, while his child-love has grown into womanhood, and learnt either womanly reserve, or has ceased to love him. He has been very patient, but now he wants to put an end to his uncertainty. Anything is better than a false hope. Ursula, what have you to say? Can you help him?"

He did not look hopeful, for while he had been speaking she had drawn away her hand.

"Felix," she said, softly, "I think the girl you speak of wants help more than the man."

"What do you mean, Ursula?"

"I mean many things which it is hard to explain. Suppose she sees that she made a mistake; suppose she is rather ashamed to be reminded of what she wishes had never been; suppose—— Oh, Felix, I am so very sorry for her!"

"For her?" he replied, with a bitter little smile; "for her? Well, yes, perhaps you are right. She is the more to be pitied of the two."

She had not expected him to take her words thus. She felt a little slighted.

"Dear, dear," she exclaimed, "just look at the clock. I must not stay another moment. Good-bye, Felix; say you forgive me for having been such a discreditable pupil. Forgive and forget."

He took her hand and smiled.

"Good-bye, Ursula," he said. "God bless you! and if I have ever said or done anything you would rather not remember, I, too, say: forgive and forget."

So she left him alone in the shabby room, where the afternoon sunlight was again sneering at the dowdy furniture. And when the twilight had stolen in and softened all the discrepancies, he still sat there, leaning his head on his hands, trying to realise what he had known for long—that his last shred of hope would shrivel away with the first breath of Ursula's decisive word.